

Praise Today

Contemporary Worship Forms in the Context of the Historical Service

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In This Issue...

Father's Day Litany— p. 2

Father's Day Service— p. 3

Original Hymns

Heav'nly Father, We Are Gathered

by Rev. Jeffrey L. Samelson, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Class of 2000

One of the blessings of this [magazine] has been the periodical sharing of hymns that our fellow believers have written. Those of us who have written hymns also appreciate the chance to share them with a wider and wiser audience and to get valuable feedback.

Anyway, it is a tradition of sorts at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary that the graduating class sing a hymn produced by the class at the graduation exercises. I had the privilege of writing the text for the WLS Class of 2000 class hymn, and I would like to share it with you.

A few words of explanation, first. The hymn was based on the class verse(s) chosen by the class. This was Romans 12:11,12:

*"Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."
(NIV)*

As there was little explicit gospel in those verses, I had to "import" some gospel motivation in order to make a proper Lutheran hymn, but I hope you are pleased with the results.

The class was sure it could only memorize four verses, so verse 3 here was omitted when we sang it at graduation. I've made one other minor change since then.

*The tune is "Fortunatus New" by Carl F. Schalk, which can be found in Christian Worship with hymn 122. The music was arranged by our class president, **Joshua Stahmann**, in four part harmony. My friend **Paul Rydecki** directed our singing. Josh and Paul really did a lot to make the hymn beautiful—sorry you couldn't be there to hear the music!*

Anyway, here it is. —Jeff

Hymn for the Graduating Class of the Year 2000

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Mequon, Wisconsin

1. Heav'nly Father, we are gathered;
Here are many joined as one.
Bowed in prayer we bend before You,
Asking that Your will be done.
Heart and hands and feet and voices
Pledge we now to serve Your Son.

2. Life and peace He came to give us
In His blood shed on the tree;
Died our death and rose victorious
That we might from sin be free.
Thankful now we live to love Him:
Christ the Lord of Calvary.

3. Joyful, then, in hope we hasten
This good news of Christ to share.
Forth we go to fields of harvest—
Souls in slav'ry to despair—
Let them hear the Word of ransom;
Let them know the hope we bear.

4. Patience, joy and perseverance
Grant our spirits, Lord, we pray.
Faithful prayer and dedication
Help us in our lives display.
Let no pain or stress or suff'ring
Lead us off the narrow way.

5. Grant us, Lord, a constant fervor
That we serve You gen'rously,
Leave behind all sloth and shirking,
Burn to labor tirelessly—
And with all your saints and angels,
Sing Your praises endlessly.

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Responsive Prayer for Father's Day

by Jeff Samelson

LEADER—Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, on this day when we give special honor to our fathers, we come before you in humility, parents and children together, and plead for your mercy according to your unfailing love.

ALL—As children, dear Lord, we confess that we have failed to always honor and obey our parents and those in authority over us. Wash away our iniquity and cleanse us of our sin.

LEADER—Forgive us for every sinful failure to give our fathers love, respect, or forgiveness.

PARENTS—As parents, dear Father, we confess that we have not always lived lives of perfect example. We confess that our relationships with our children have not been as loving, patient, firm or forgiving as you command. We confess that we have exasperated our children with our failures and frustrated them with our frailties.

LEADER—Forgive us all for every selfish, faithless act or thought that denies or disregards the responsibilities you have given us. According to your great compassion blot out our transgressions.

ALL—As your family, dear Lord, we are troubled by our sin. We confess that we have not honored your gift of marriage as you command. With selfishness and lust, dissatisfaction and disrespect we and our society have cheapened and broken the blessed union of husband and wife, of father and mother.

LEADER—Against you, you only have we sinned. Hide your face from our sins and blot out our iniquity.

ALL—We have sinned against the Lord.

LEADER—The Lord has taken away our sin.

LEADER—Almighty God, who established fatherhood in your creation and who has shown a Father's love in all your dealings with us, we pray for earthly fathers and their children.

ALL—Lift up and strengthen our fathers and grandfathers, and any who have served us as fathers without bearing that name. Give them strength and wisdom to lead and love their families according to your example and command.

FATHERS—Let our children see you in us. Lead them to value and imitate all the good that you have done in us and withhold from them our weaknesses. Establish and increase both unity and love in all our family.

ALL—Bless the fatherless, and use us to be a blessing to them. Through us and all believers support and strengthen both fathers and your plan for fatherhood.

LEADER—Dear Jesus Christ, God's own dear Son, who submitted to your Father's will and taught us how to honor and address him as our own Father, we pray for men and women, for husbands and wives.

ALL—Help us to submit to each other out of reverence for you.

WIVES—Give us humility, strength, love and patience, Lord, so that we submit to our husbands as to you. Help us to be their helpers, and move us to respect and strengthen them in their roles as fathers.

HUSBANDS—Give us a love like yours, O Christ, that we love our wives as you loved your church and give ourselves to and for them. Give us patience, love, and sensitivity, and crush our sinful pride whenever it intrudes and threatens our loving union.

ALL—Bless the unmarried and strengthen them in following your will. Give them chastity, purity, and peace, and help them live lives devoted to you.

Praise Today is an independent publication serving pastors and worship leaders of confessional Lutheranism. It is published monthly and relies heavily on the submissions of subscribers to share their ideas of worship framed in the historical orders of service with application to the needs of Christians today.

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Praise Today

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LEADER—Come, Holy Spirit, Faith-giver and Sanctifier, and bless us with your wisdom. We pray for the salvation and instruction of children everywhere.

PARENTS—Deepen our desire and hunger for the Scriptures, that we might be more ready and able to raise our children in the training and instruction of the Lord. Lead us to live lives of joyful sanctification that show your presence in our hearts. Unless you build our house, our labors are in vain.

ALL—Lead children to honor and obey in all things out of love for you and for their parents. Let them walk in your ways, and keep your decrees and commands, so that they may prosper in all they do and wherever they go.

LEADER—O Holy Spirit, let the word of Christ dwell in us richly as we teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, giving thanks to God our Father. Amen.

(Special prayers and intercession may follow.)

LEADER—And we join in praying the prayer Jesus taught us to pray to his Father:

(The Lord's Prayer, page 43.)



Father's Day Service

by Jeff Samelson (WELS)

I thought I might share with you some of the things we used in a special service at Woodlawn last year (1999). The service and sermon were well received, so I'm offering it up to all of you if you'd like to use any element of it in this or any other year.

We used the standard service of the Word.

Three hymns:

421 - "All Depends on Our Possessing"

506 - "Oh, Blest the House, Whate'er Befall"

500 - "For Christian Homes, O Lord, We Pray"

(This year, 2000, given that Father's day is Trinity Sunday, the Hymn of the Day, 177/178 - "Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest" would certainly also be appropriate)

1ST READING—selected verses from 2 Samuel & 1 Kings. (I used the story of David and his sons for illustration in the sermon)

2ND READING—Colossians 3:12-21

SERMON—Ephesians 6:1-4

Father's Instruction

I. Fathers, Listen to the Lord!

II. Children, Listen to Your Fathers!

For the psalm I did a setting of Psalm 127. I tried to write a new refrain, but I'm not much of an arranger, so it was unfamiliar and maybe kind of difficult. The verses used a psalm tone out of *Christian Worship* (CW).

Finally, we used a special responsive prayer (see above).

PRAYER OF THE DAY—The Prayer of the Day was a slight modification of CW's psalm prayer for Psalm 78:

Dear Heavenly and loving Father, let your Word be a lamp for our feet and a light to our path so that we and our children may understand what you would have us know and believe, as we walk on the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY—The Verse of the Day was from Proverbs 14:26:

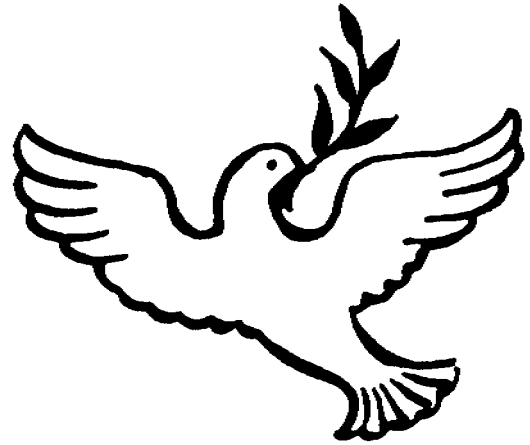
Alleluia. He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge. Alleluia.

Ascension/Pentecost Hymn

by ... Thomas Cotterill (1779-1833)

This 7-6-8-6 meter poem would make a fine hymn for celebrating Ascension and/or Pentecost. Unfortunately, Christian Worship does not contain any 7-6-8-6 meter tunes. You may be able to use a 7-6-7-6 meter tune, or if someone finds or writes a 7-6-8-6 meter tune, please share with Praise Today!

1. Let songs of praise fill the sky!
Christ, our ascended Lord,
Sends down his Spirit from on high,
According to his word.
2. The Spirit by his heav'nly breath,
New life creates within:
He quickens sinners from the death
Of trespasses and sin.
3. The things of Christ th' Spirit takes,
And shows them unto men;
The fallen soul his temple makes,
God's image stamps again
4. Come, Holy Spirit, from above,
With thy celestial fire:
Come, and with flames of zeal and love
Our hearts and tongues inspire.



In His Hands

by Betty Purser Patten

1. We know not what tomorrow brings
... Although we plan ahead
For only God alone can know
... the pathway we must tread.



2. We cannot know the future
... not one minute nor one hour
Each circumstance that we must face
... lay only in His power.
3. It's vital that we live by faith
... from minute unto minute
And trusting that each step we take
... He's walking with us in it.
4. We cannot see the future
... nor the trials we must face
But in all things, God promised us
... sufficiency of grace.
5. This alone should give us hope
... whatever be our plans
In knowing that our future lies
... in His sweet, loving hands.

Ever, Only Jesus

By Thomas A. Davis

Some years ago there lived in one of the poorer sections of London a man who professed to be an infidel. Several of his Christian friends labored to bring him to have faith in the Bible and Christ, but all their efforts proved fruitless. As the years passed, he grew hardened and cynical.

In time the weight of years lay heavily upon him, and one day he went to his bed for the last time. One of his Christian neighbors, who had faithfully endeavored to lead him to Christ, took his Bible and climbed the dark, dirty stairs to the garret where the sick man lay. He knocked on the warped door, and a weak voice invited him in.

As soon as he entered, the dying man looked up and rasped, "So it's you with that Book again! Take your old Bible from here. I want nothing to do with it!"

Sorrowfully the would-be friend returned home, where he related his experience to his wife.

All unnoticed by him, his small daughter had been listening. When he was finished, she went to her room and took from a drawer her most precious possession, the new Bible her daddy had given her at Christmas. With it tucked under her arm, she walked down the street to the infidel's home and up the same stairs her father had descended a short while before.

Knocking on the door, she heard the old man's voice inviting her in.

"And what do you want, little girl?"

"Daddy said you didn't want his OLD Bible, so maybe you will take my NEW one." Bursting into tears she laid it quickly on the table beside the bed and ran from the dingy room.

Soon afterward the old man died. When the social workers went to remove his body, they found under his pillow the little girl's Bible and a piece of soiled paper, stained with the marks of many tears, on which these words were written:

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|--|--|
| 1. I've tried in vain a thousand ways
My fears to quell, my hopes to raise;
But what I need, the Bible says,
Is ever, only Jesus. | 3. He died, He lives, He reigns, He pleads;
There's love in all His words and deeds;
There's all a guilty sinner needs
For evermore in Jesus. |
| 2. My soul is night, my heart is steel,
I cannot see, I cannot feel;
For light, for life, I must appeal
In simple faith to Jesus. | 4. Though some should sneer, and some should blame,
I'll go with all my guilt and shame;
I'll go to Him because His name,
Above all names, is Jesus |

This is 8-8-8-7 meter. There is one hymn with 8-8-8-7 meter in Christian Worship— "Quem Pastores" (# 42).

Open Our Hearts Inside

by Jima Ledlow

Another fine hymn courtesy of Jima Ledlow. The tune from The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) #422 is the preferred choice of the author.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Open our hearts inside, receive Your love.
Spirit fulfill and guide, with joy above.
Start now today, dear Lord, Prepare us with Your Word
Knowing We'll be restored, Faithful to You. | 3. Connection to our Lord is what we need.
Searching outside His grace will never meet,
The plans He has for us, to fill our lives with love,
Building His kingdom up, down on our knees. |
| 2. Spirit so strong and full, Guide us this day
We call upon You now, come as We pray.
Quiet our fearful hearts, reveal right from the start,
Jesus knows ever part, Our life with Thee. | (c) 1999 Words by Jima Ledlow. Used by permission. |

“Mother of Our Lord”

by Jima Ledlow

Preferred tune: The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) #45

This hymn celebrates Mary's day.

1. Mary shared herself with God, Jesus nurtured safe within her.
Joseph held her close at night, caring for her sweet and tender.
Then one day the Lord was given, Life on earth to guide our living.
2. This conception Spirit pure, Mary's thoughts rouse deep inside her.
Holy Spirit caused the stir, Now this life will grow inside her.
In this God revealed His purpose, How this birth would heal and save us.
3. As His Mother she did see, That her role was serving freely.
When time came to let Him Go, Trusting in God's wisdom she'll know
That the Father blessed her richly, with a Child she loved so dearly.
4. God's great plan she pondered years, How this Son of hers would change lives
Through His thirty-three earth years, How He altered and decreased strife.
In her prayers she said her goodbye, On that day to Heav'n He did rise.
5. Now rejoice and sing this song, Let your heart and voice soar loudly.
Jesus in us we'll be strong, giving of ourselves most gladly.
His forgiveness and grace show me, We are treasured and loved dearly.

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Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life

by George Herbert (1593-1633)

1. Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:
Such a Way, as gives us breath:
Such a Truth, as ends all strife:
And such a Life as killeth death.
2. Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength :
Such a Light, as shows a feast :
Such a Feast, as mends in length :
Such a Strength, as makes his guest.
3. Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart :
Such a Joy, as none can move :
Such a Love, as none can part :
Such a Heart, as joyes in love.



We Built in Vain

By Richard Futrell

A Hymn for Pentecost Recommended Tune: Bangor, Welsh melody from William Tans'ur's Compleat Melody of 1735

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. We built in vain, we were too proud,
Ambitions gone awry;
God scattered us, our muddled tongue
Cried out into the sky. | 5. God comes to us in His pure Word
To pierce the heart and mind,
To speak His law and speak His grace
To all of humankind. |
| 2. In later years, God gathered us,
Put chaos to an end;
In many tongues the Word was preached
And we did comprehend. | 6. God comes in water, ever plain,
So we are born above;
Our sins are washed and God bestows
His mercy and His love. |
| 3. The rush of wind, the tongue of fire
Shows forth that Christ is here,
Who ministers by Spirit now,
To quench our guilt and fear. | 7. God comes to us in bread and wine,
With body and with blood,
In simple, common food and drink
He sends a cleansing flood. |
| 4. Yes, God still comes to us this day
Through His appointed ways:
In means so simple, yet profound,
In awe we thank and praise. | 8. God sends to us His Spirit still
In Word and Sacrament;
And, thus, with single tongue we praise
In speech made eloquent. |

Who can Hide Me From the Lord God?

by Richard Futrell, 2000

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Who can hide me from the Lord God?
I am sinful and unclean!
Guilt and evil live within me,
Ever known and ever seen.
Only God can hide and keep me
From His wrath and from His might;
Only He is pure and holy,
Covers me in purest light. | 3. Washed and baptized into Jesus,
He baptized me in His death,
He has named me and entombed me--
Gave me His life-giving breath.
Now when God looks down from heaven
He finds me enrobed in Christ;
I am holy and forgiven
Through His Son's dark sacrifice. |
| 2. Christ was pierced for my transgressions,
Crushed for my iniquity!
Who can drink the cup that He drank?
None, such thoughts are vanity.
In life, death, and resurrection,
The baptism that He took,
Is the only place to hide me,
Thanks to His redeeming work. | 4. Now I live in my baptism,
Die each day with Christ and rise;
Christ Himself now lives within me,
He has washed me, raised my eyes.
Now I love and serve my neighbor,
Serving God, the true Divine,
For no matter what may happen,
I am Christ's and He is mine. |

Soul, Adorn Yourself in Gladness

By Johann Franck Translated by Richard Futrell, 2000

1. Soul, adorn yourself in gladness,
Leave sin's darkened depths of sadness;
Come into the light so gleaming,
Robed resplendently and beaming.
Yes, the Lord of my salvation Sends His grace, His
invitation,
For the Ruler of all heaven Yearns to make my heart His
haven.
2. Eager, now I go to meet Him,
As a bride, in haste, to greet Him,
For He knocks with grace and passion
At my heart with love's compassion.
By the Spirit, my heart welcomes Christ, my Groom, in
loving anthems:
"Come, my Beauty and my Splendor, Never leave my heart
asunder."
3. Now in joy and awe I shudder,
For You bring to me Your supper.
I know not Your deepest musings,
Nor the myst'ries of Your workings.
Who can know Your deepest secrets?
Can we grasp Your furthest limits? You are God of earth and
heaven,
Lord Almighty, Christ, and Sov'reign.
4. Here our reason must be yielding
To this marvel God is wielding:
How can bread be His true body,
Which is endless and feeds many;
And the wine that He is giving Is His true blood, ever living?
O the greatness of this wonder Only God can know and
master!
5. Jesus, shining Sun and Treasure,
Jesus, Joy and my heart's Pleasure;
Jesus, also my Creator, Source of life, Illuminator:
Here I humbly kneel before You;
Make me worthy I implore You,
For You bring me food from heaven,
For my good, which You have given.
6. Jesus, true Bread, ever living,
When I eat what You are giving,
Let Your Presence here sustain me,
Grant me life, and not condemn me.
Let me eat Your Supper, knowing
The forgiveness You are showing,
Then in heaven when I meet You
Let me worship, love, and greet You.